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10TH DISTRICT, NEW JERSEY

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS,
RESPONSE AND COMMUNICATIONS
RANKING MEMBER

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE
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May 26, 2017

To: Governor Chris Christie
Richard T. Hammer, Transportation Commissioner and NJ Transit Board Chair
Steven H. Santoro, NJ Transit Executive Director

I write to express that I share my constituent's concerns about New Jersey Transit's plans to reroute Midtown Direct service during Amtrak's New York Penn Station track work and to apologize for my absence at today's meeting, as defending commuters and improving New Jersey's transportation infrastructure are top priorities for me.

My staff and I have been briefed on Amtrak's Penn Station plans and I am deeply engaged in ensuring that New Jersey commuters are treated fairly during this summer's work. The infrastructure leading to and sitting under Penn Station is decades old and in some cases over a century old. Much of it is custom-made and therefore costly and time-consuming to repair and replace. The underfunding of this critical infrastructure has unfortunately led us to a point where significant shutdowns are the only way to ensure the continued safe operation of trains over the tracks.

In my role as a member of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, I actively engage with the key stakeholders to ensure that New Jerseyans are treated equitably. In this instance, I believe that my constituents are not being treated fairly. The upcoming track work at Penn Station centers around the "A" Interlocking which is primarily used by New Jersey Transit and Amtrak. Over 180,000 New Jersey Transit commuters travel through Penn Station daily, more than six times the number of Amtrak passengers, meaning that the closures will have an outsized impact on the already beleaguered New Jersey commuters.

I am keenly aware that the track work is unavoidable. However, New Jersey Transit's current plan is to redirect all Midtown Direct trains to Hoboken while making no changes to other lines' schedules, denying many of my constituents the one-seat ride that drew them to Northern New Jersey. I strongly urge New Jersey Transit to reconsider its current plans and devise a plan that is more equitable for all New Jersey commuters.

Sincerely,



Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress